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Reserve

SOLDIERS' PLANS FOR FARMING AFTER THEY LEAVE THE ARMY 1/

More than 800,000 men now in the Army expect to farm after the war, according to a survey conducted by the Information and Education Division of the Army Service Forces in the summer of 1944. Shifts in the plans of men not definitely decided but now considering full-time farming as a post-war occupation might lower this figure to 650,000 or raise it as high as 1,000,000 although the latter seems unlikely.

The estimate of over 800,000 prospective farmers now in the Army corresponds roughly with the number who left farming to enter the Army, the survey shows. This total is made up principally of white enlisted men, but includes about 60,000 Negro enlisted men and 10,000 to 15,000 officers, as shown by separate surveys made among these three groups. The data presented in the report are based largely on the indicated post-war plans of white enlisted men representing a cross-section of troops in the United States and among selected samples of troops in two overseas theaters during the summer of 1944. Unless otherwise specified in this summary, the results of the survey mentioned are those obtained from white enlisted men. With few exceptions, however, the situation is not greatly different for Negroes.

Although the Army Service Forces recognize the sample of troops surveyed may not in all respects represent a true cross-section of the Army, they do believe only one significant source of bias exists in that questionnaires were not filled out by white enlisted men who did not have the necessary education to give adequate answers. As expressed by the Army Service Forces, "It is estimated that from two to perhaps four percent of the white enlisted men were thereby excluded from consideration. The greater part of this group excluded would, of course, be from rural areas. In predicting the probable number of men who may be expected to farm after the war, consideration will have to be given this fact." No educational bias exists in the estimates of Negro enlisted men because those who did not meet certain educational qualifications were interviewed.

Of the white enlisted men questioned, about 10 percent reported they were considering farming as a full-time occupation after the war. Included in this 10 percent are nearly 8 percent with fairly definite plans for farming and slightly over 2 percent who are either considering some alternative occupation or are uncertain that they will farm. In addition

1/ This is a condensation by the office of Information of Report No. B-131, which is one of a series of reports on post-war plans of the soldiers based on surveys made by the Information and Education Division Headquarters, Army Service Forces. This survey is based upon the answers of 15,286 white enlisted men and 3,000 Negro enlisted men; the number of officers questioned was not given.

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to this 10 percent who are considering full-time farming, another 15 percent say they "may do some farming" although most of these men have fairly definite plans to do something else. Another 6 percent expressed interest in part-time farming. Of this number, about 1 percent name part-time farming as their primary post-war plan, while the other 5 percent consider it as secondary to plans for a steady job off the farm.

Besides attempting to determine the number of men who expect to farm, the survey also sought to learn about their previous farming experience; where they want to farm; the type of farming they expect to do; how many expect to operate farms and whether or not they will have to find their farms after they leave the Army; how much they expect to invest in their farms; how many will work on family farms; and the degree of interest that exists in new land areas.

The survey showed that about 9 out of 10 of those who definitely expect to farm after the war had at least one year's full-time farming experience. Only 2 percent reported no previous farming experience. Even among men with relatively vague plans to farm, a considerable majority have had some previous farming experience. The farming experience of men seriously considering full-time farming after the war was most often gained on family farms or as hired workers, but more than a fourth of them say they operated farms before the war. It is estimated that only about 18,000 of the white enlisted men in the Army who expect to farm after the war do not have any farming experience. This would seem to dispel any fear that large numbers of men without farm background will want to farm.

To a large extent the men who farmed before the war and who expect to farm after the war are planning to return to the area from which they were inducted. The principal products or crops they expect to raise correspond in general with the patterns of farming in the regions to which they expect to go. And, quite naturally, the men with farm experience who expect to farm say they will go back to the same type of farming in which they were previously engaged. Nearly four-fifths of the men with definite plans to farm said they will do general farming, while the remaining fifth said they would go into a type of "farming where most of the money would come from some one product or crop."

White enlisted men who definitely plan to farm expect to get their main income from the following sources, listed in the order of their importance, by regions: Northeast--dairying, poultry, truck crops and/or field crops; North-central States--corn and/or livestock feeding, dairying, cattle and sheep (range); South--cattle and sheep (range), cotton, tobacco; West--cattle and sheep (range), dairying, livestock feeding. Region by region, there is little evidence of any proposed shift in the kind of crops to be raised from those raised before, except for the South. Although one-third of the men from the South reported cotton as the main crop of the farm on which they worked, only 17 percent expect to raise it as their principal crop after the war. Most of those who plan to shift from cotton checked "cattle and sheep" or "livestock feeding" as their prospective major sources of income.

One of the more pertinent questions of the survey, from the standpoint of availability of enough farms, was: "If you expect to work on a farm when you get out of the Army, do you have some particular farm in mind or will you have to look for a farm?" Nearly two-thirds of those who expect to farm, said they did have a particular farm in mind. Included in this two-thirds, however, are



about 150,000 who only know which farm they "expect to rent or buy." Many factors make uncertain their prospects for obtaining the particular farm they want. They may find that competition for the farms they want is too keen as there are about 125,000 men in the Army alone, according to the survey, who expect to operate farms after the war but who do not have particular farms in mind.

More specific data drawn from the survey as to plans for obtaining a farm shows that: approximately 16% own a farm; 23.5% expect to work on the family farm; 27.5% know which farm they expect to rent or buy; 25% will need to look for a farm; 6% expect to work for wages; and 2% have no definite plans for farming.

Most of the men not returning to family farms regard themselves as potential farm operators, as evidenced by the fact that only 5 percent of the white enlisted men and 10 percent of the Negro enlisted men who are quite sure they will farm say they expect to work for wages. Three-fourths of the white enlisted men who feel sure they will farm can be said to have definite, consistent plans for operating a farm either by themselves or with relatives. These comprise 6 percent of all white enlisted men surveyed. Another 2 percent of the white enlisted men say they may try to operate a farm, but are not sure. Among the Negro enlisted men, 4 percent have definite plans for operating a farm either by themselves or with a relative and another 2 percent have less definite plans to operate a farm.

More than half of the men planning definitely to farm report that their fathers are farm operators although less than one-fourth expect to work on their families' farms. Negro enlisted men, however, are slightly more apt to return to their families' farms.

As to how much money these prospective farmers expect to spend to get started in farming, it was found that 48 percent expect to invest \$4,000 or less; 20 percent between \$4,000 and \$10,000; and 3 percent, over \$10,000. Although a slight majority of the prospective farm operators say they will have at least half of the money they will need to get started with, many are planning very small investments--too small for efficient and profitable operation. Thirty-six percent of the men who own farms say they will have all the money they need to get started, and another 24 percent will have at least half. It would seem, from the survey, that most of the Negroes who expect to farm after they leave the Army expect to make comparatively small investments of capital in their farms.

Rather surprisingly, men who expect to return to family farms indicate that they will be no better off with respect to working capital than men who say they know which farm they expect to rent or buy. Both of these groups, however, expect to be better supplied with working capital than men who say they will need to look for a farm. These men, comprising 29 percent of all those who indicate definite plans to operate a farm, will be at a disadvantage not only with respect to locating desirable farms but also with respect to finances. Only 6 percent say they expect to have all the money they will need to get started, and 24 percent say they don't know where they will get the money.

To determine the interest of enlisted men in new farm lands, provided such land is opened for settlement after the war, this question was asked:

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"Do you think you would want to go to one of these new land areas to farm?" Approximately one-sixth of the white enlisted men who are quite sure they will farm say they would want to go to a new land area. Nearly a third of the Negro enlisted men say they would want to go to a new land area. But the question was probably too general and hypothetical, the Army Service Forces believe, to justify taking the men's responses as indicative of anything more than a degree of interest in new farm lands. The location of new land and the type of crops that could be grown would have to be stated as a minimum condition for attempting to predict how many men would really be likely to migrate to new farm land.

In interpreting their findings, the Army Service Forces make this statement: "First of all, prediction of the number of men who will actually farm cannot be made solely on the basis of the men's intentions of farming. The intentions of the men at this time may be relatively unimportant as determinants of latter action unless certain conditions are met after the war. Among these conditions the following may be considered as of major importance: (1) there must not be too great a differential between opportunities open in agriculture and those offered by industry; (2) there must be farms available for those men will go into farming only if they can be operators; (3) men counting on loans guaranteed by the government under the G. I. Bill of Rights in order to finance farm operation must actually be able to qualify for such loans. (It should be noted that at the time this survey was made, enlisted men had very little information about the G. I. Bill.) Thus economic conditions and policies can modify drastically the extent to which men will carry out after the war their present intentions."

Data from another source U.S.D.A. Fact Sheet on Where Are the Farms? issued October 1944 suggest that the greatest potential source from which veterans may obtain the farms they want after the war is perhaps the ordinary turnover in farms which can be expected to increase in the immediate post-war period by the sale of farms by older farmers whose retirement the war has postponed. About 300,000 farms and farm tracts changed hands by voluntary sale last year. About 125,000 farms, mostly in the South and West, can be developed through irrigation, drainage, and land clearance work in 3 to 5 years after the War, if funds are made available for the purpose. This will depend on public policy and the demand for farm products.

The Army Service Forces also pointed out that although the estimated number of prospective farmers in the Army corresponds roughly with the number who were farming just prior to induction, this does not mean that the nation's farms will be able to absorb all the men planning to return to them. On the contrary, "A return to farming of as large a proportion of enlisted men as now contemplate returning would probably give rise to acute problems in the agricultural economy," they warn. This prediction was based on the fact that normally the population in rural areas increases more rapidly than it can be efficiently utilized on the farms; that a certain proportion of the young men inducted would have probably left the farms anyway if they had not been drafted; and that the increased efficiency achieved during the war in farm operation will no doubt be maintained or even increased with the greater amount of farm machinery that will be available after the war.

Two potential dangers are recognized by the Army Service Forces: (1) that so many prospective farmers in the Army expect to operate farms but are not sure they can obtain them; and (2) that many of the men who plan to operate farms say they expect to invest less capital than would be required to stock and equip them and provide adequate operating expenses. A large number may attempt to farm on submarginal lands where their chances of success will be slight for this reason, it was pointed out. Speaking especially of Negro soldiers in this connection, it was stated: "Like white enlisted men, they need counseling that will help them make more realistic plans--counseling before they leave the Army and counseling from those best equipped to evaluate farming opportunities in the local areas to which they will return."

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